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RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 4172  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 3652  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 6727  
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 2050

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 001970

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG  
NSC FOR HARRIMAN  
OSD FOR SHIVERS  
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-82 POLAD  
RELEASABLE TO NATO/AUST/NZ/ISAF

E.O. 12958 N/A

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SUBJECT: GUNMEN SHOOT SCHOOLGIRLS IN LOGAR

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) Two schoolgirls were killed and five wounded on June 12 when two assailants fired at students leaving a school in Logar Province south of Kabul. Police report they have made three arrests, including one of the shooters. Afghan authorities believe that the gunmen were Taliban members; however, a Taliban spokesman has denied responsibility. Provincial officials have noted a decline in girls' attendance at school since the incident. In response to a request from the Provincial Education Officer in Logar, UNICEF has agreed to build security walls around four other girls' schools in the province. END SUMMARY.

THE ATTACK AND ANP RESPONSE

2. (SBU) Two gunmen fired indiscriminately at students in front of Khali Saida girls' middle and secondary school in Logar Province on June 12 (graduation day), killing two girls and wounding five others. The assailants apparently waited for school to recess for the day and shot the girls (aged 12-14) from a nearby wheat field as the girls started to leave the school grounds. The gunmen escaped on foot, but local Afghan National Police (ANP) officials say they have arrested three men in connection with the shooting. ANP believe at least one of those arrested was an actual gunman and claim that the arrested gunman is an anti-government insurgent. Two of the wounded girls were medevaced to Kabul and are listed in stable condition.

TALIBAN RESPONSIBLE?

3. (U) Afghan Education Minister Hanif Atmar condemned the attack and blamed the Taliban. "Those who carried out this cowardly attack

are the enemies of the country." A Taliban spokesperson, however, denied responsibility for the assault, alleging that a tribal feud was the most likely motive. During a June 16 ceremony, Minister Atmar vowed to build more girls' schools in Logar -- two of which will be named after the murdered girls -- as a testament to the GOA's commitment to women's education and its refusal to be intimidated by terrorist acts. President Karzai also received the victims' families and elders from Logar at the Palace. Solatia payments of USD \$4000 and \$1000, respectively, will be given to compensate families of the murdered and injured girls.

#### UNICEF TO BUILD WALLS AROUND OTHER GIRLS' SCHOOLS

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¶4. (U) Having noted that attendance at girls' schools around the province has declined significantly since the shooting, the Provincial Education Officer asked the international community to build security walls around four other vulnerable girls' schools. UNICEF has agreed to build these walls, and USAID is identifying options to promote continuing girls' education in the community.

#### THE LARGER PICTURE

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¶5. (SBU) While the Taliban have previously destroyed several girls' schools in the area and killed teachers, they have not directly attacked students in Logar province before. The Ministry of Education reported that in 2006, nation-wide 198 schools were attacked and a total of 370 schools were closed due to threats or community fears, preventing almost 220,000 students from receiving an education. These attacks killed at least 54 teachers, students, or other school employees. The first half of 2007, however, has

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generally witnessed a sharp decline in the number of attacks on schools, students, and teachers, presumably as Taliban and other insurgents realized that attacking Afghan children and teachers creates resistance within the local population.